Returning to God Begins with Repairing the Injustice

Before entering the Kingdom of God, authentic repentance entails more than regret and the confession of sin—it also involves repairing injustice. If you have stolen, deceived, or taken advantage of others, a sincere return to God begins with restoring what does not belong to you. God cannot declare righteous someone who keeps what he obtained through injustice and enjoys the fruits of lawlessness. He does not overlook unsettled injustice.

Although the Lord Jesus paid the penalty for the sin of theft, this does not cancel the personal responsibility to repair the wrong done. Restitution remains a moral and spiritual obligation. True repentance does not stop at words, but proves itself through concrete acts of righting wrongs. Scripture warns: “Woe to him that coveteth an evil covetousness to his house” (Habakkuk 2:9).

This attempt to build security on injustice is an illusion, and God condemns it unequivocally.

To better understand the obligation of restitution as an act of justice, we can look at a concrete example—one that human courts treat with extreme seriousness and fairness. A citizen caught in tax evasion is not only criminally convicted; he is obliged to return the entire amount stolen, together with the penalties and interest due for the period in which the state was deprived of those funds.

Justice is not satisfied with a mere conviction—it requires the repairing of the damage. If restitution were not mandatory, many would be tempted to steal large sums, accept a prison sentence of a few years, and then live comfortably on what they had stolen. This would be a flagrant injustice toward those who are honest, choosing to live rightly without exploiting others.

Restitution is a precondition for the new life to begin. New birth is not only an inner change, but a transformation seen in deeds.

As Scripture says: “If he returns what he took as security for a loan, gives back what he has stolen, follows the decrees that give life, and does no evil, he will surely live; he will not die. None of the sins he has committed will be remembered against him. He has done what is just and right; he will surely live” (Ezekiel 33:15–16).

Here we see clearly that the new life — a symbol of being born again — is conditioned by making restitution to the one who was wronged. It is not enough to claim that you

have changed; you must prove this change through restitution, even when direct compensation is no longer possible. In the Kingdom of God, justice is not optional — it is an essential expression of righteousness.

If someone has stolen, defrauded, or taken advantage of others, they cannot regard those things as rightfully theirs. No one has the right to keep what was obtained through injustice — whether money, goods, or positions. Divine justice is not satisfied with merely acknowledging the wrong; it demands that the wrong be made right.

To make this clear, let us take two practical examples:

Suppose that from the age of 50 until reaching retirement, I avoided paying income tax by working “off the books.” During all that time, I paid pension contributions directly, as if I had no income, solely to qualify for a pension in old age. In those years, my children and I benefited from child allowances, free schooling, medical care, and other public services — all funded by the contributions of those who paid their taxes honestly.

Now, a few days ago, I reached retirement age, and yesterday I returned to God. The state does not know that I lied to and defrauded it until just 3–4 days ago. Yet I, now calling myself a believer, think I can receive the pension without repaying the taxes owed on the income I concealed — simply because the institution is unaware of my actions. If the state knew the truth, it would restore justice by taking measures to recover the loss.

The same principle of justice applies in another case: for several years, I collected a disability pension obtained through fraud. Upon reaching retirement age, I begin receiving the standard pension.

The state — the institution I have deceived — continues to pay me monthly with respect, correctness, and punctuality. It is a sobering picture: I, who stole for years, receive money every month from the one I defrauded, and they continue to treat me honorably, unaware they are the victim of injustice.

So the question is: can I live with this lie while claiming to be born of the Righteous God?

The answer of Scripture is categorical: no. True repentance does not mean only regret — it means repairing the injustice. To keep what you obtained through deceit, even after becoming religious, is to continue living in sin. The fact that the victim does not know does not cancel your guilt. God sees what is hidden and demands justice, not excuses. It is a moral abomination to receive such money with peace of mind without

repairing the damage. It is as if I were sitting at the table with the one I stole from, and he offers me his bread, not knowing I took it in secret.

To keep receiving the pension without confessing and without repaying means living a lie — enjoying the fruits of fraud while the victim remains in ignorance and goodwill.

Scripture says in Proverbs 28:13: “Whoever conceals their sins does not prosper, but the one who confesses and renounces them finds mercy.” To hide a sin is to keep it alive. God does not offer mercy to the one who secretly regrets, but to the one who honestly confesses and abandons the sin.

In both cases — whether I worked “off the books” to avoid paying taxes or obtained a disability pension through fraud — true repentance involves not only admitting the wrongdoing but also restoring what was taken. If I have stolen what was not mine, I must give back everything I stole. Only then can I live in truth and righteousness before God.

Scripture says in Psalm 37:21: “The wicked borrow and do not repay.” Though the verse speaks of borrowing, the principle applies even more strongly to theft, which is far more serious. Borrowing involves an agreement, a trust granted — even if later betrayed. Theft, on the other hand, is a hidden act without consent — a direct violation of another’s rights. If Scripture calls “wicked” the one who does not repay a loan, how much more is the person who steals intentionally and refuses to return what was taken condemned.

Injustice consists not only in taking what is not yours but also in refusing to return it. To keep what is not rightfully yours, even after becoming a believer, places you in the category Scripture calls “wicked.” God judges not only the initial act but also the attitude toward making it right. Refusal to return what you have stolen is not the end of sin — it is its active continuation.

These two verses together form a clear picture: repentance without restitution is an illusion, and hidden sin continues to separate from Christ.

His Kingdom is built on truth, justice, and purity — not on religious justifications or convenient forgetting of the past. Whether it involves money, goods, or positions — such as materials taken from the workplace, firewood obtained dishonestly, illicit pensions, taxes evaded, or a diploma earned by cheating — whatever was obtained unjustly cannot be considered legitimate. To keep such things in your life is to live in ongoing offense against the holiness of God.

God asks sharply: “Shall I acquit someone with dishonest scales, with a bag of false weights?” (Micah 6:10). This rhetorical question reveals a serious reality: in the house of the wicked there are things obtained through deceit, and God does not overlook them.

Tax theft, for example, means keeping in your house money that is not yours — dishonest treasures — used as if they were legitimate gain. It is a form of squeezing the state “in the dark,” in secret. But God sees and will call for an account. He asks: “Can I tolerate these things in your house?” — and the implicit answer, as in the case of Achan, is a categorical “No.”

Even if all seems well hidden — false contracts, off-the-books payments, undeclared income, disability pensions obtained by lying — the things obtained in this way become witnesses of injustice. The house, the car, the bank account — all “cry out” against the one who acquired them through deceit, like the beam in Habakkuk 2:11.

Thus, not only withheld wages, as written in James 5:4 — “Look! The wages you failed to pay the workers… are crying out against you” — but any gain obtained through deceit has a voice before God. Injustice cannot be hidden; it rises as testimony against the one who committed it, calling divine judgment upon the act.

True repentance involves not only confessing sin but also removing any injustice kept alive in your life. Micah 6:10 is a solemn warning: we cannot have fellowship with God and at the same time keep treasures obtained through wrongdoing in our homes. Genuine repentance means abandoning them, returning them, living in the light, and aligning ourselves with God’s righteousness.

What was stolen cannot be kept under the pretext of grace. Grace does not cover hidden sin — it exposes it to cleanse it. Only the one who rejects such illicit gains and refuses to accept them into their life will dwell in God’s presence, as Scripture affirms: “The one who walks righteously and speaks what is right, who rejects gain from extortion… he will dwell on the heights” (Isaiah 33:15).

The command for restitution — “They must make full restitution” (Numbers 5:6). In the Kingdom of God there is no tolerance for dishonest gain. Forgiveness does not come without restitution, and if direct compensation is no longer possible, the stolen thing must be given to the Lord. Divine justice does not allow keeping what was obtained through deceit, regardless of circumstances.

The Bible is categorical: restitution is mandatory, even if indirect. It is an essential condition of forgiveness and salvation. Whoever has wronged another must repair the harm done. If the harmed person can no longer be compensated — as in the case of

stolen taxes — Scripture gives a clear solution: restitution must be brought before the Lord.

It is written: “Say to the Israelites: Any man or woman who wrongs another in any way and so is unfaithful to the Lord is guilty and must confess the sin they have committed. They must make full restitution for the wrong they have done, add a fifth of the value to it, and give it all to the person they have wronged. But if that person has no close relative to whom restitution can be made for the wrong, the restitution belongs to the Lord and must be given to the priest, along with the ram of atonement with which atonement is made for the guilty person” (Numbers 5:6).

These verses make it clear: there is no excuse for keeping what was taken unjustly. Even when direct restitution is no longer possible, God requires that compensation be made by offering the item or its value to Him. In this way, the principle of justice is upheld, and repentance becomes complete.

Restitution is essential evidence of repentance and new birth. If you can no longer restore directly to the wronged person, you must give to the Lord — because justice and holiness cannot be ignored. God does not accept incomplete repentance. He demands repair, sincerity, and responsibility.

There is no blessing over what is stained by injustice. The righteousness of God’s Kingdom does not tolerate compromise. Treasure gained through lies — including through undeclared work or tax evasion — is a fleeting vanity: it does not remain, it does not build, and it leads to death.

True blessing comes only when we live in truth, justice, and purity, aligned with the standard of God’s Kingdom. Scripture is very clear: “A fortune made by a lying tongue is a fleeting vapor and a deadly snare” (Proverbs 21:6). This verse highlights a profound truth: any gain obtained through deceit lacks real value and keeps a person in spiritual death.

The “lying tongue” symbolizes all forms of manipulation, falsification, cheating, and deception — whether in speech, in documents, or in conduct.

In some cases, there is nothing left to return, because the goods obtained unjustly have been consumed. Yet Scripture does not ignore this reality; it offers a fair solution: “Anyone who steals must certainly make restitution, but if they have nothing, they must be sold to pay for their theft” (Exodus 22:3).

This command expresses a divine principle: authentic repentance does not exclude repairing the harm done. New birth cannot occur where a person refuses to part with

shameful deeds and to make things right — for this is an offense against the holiness of Christ. Repentance is not only sorrow, but also the fulfillment of justice.

Just as the state, when recovering damages and there is nothing to seize, applies a percentage to the offender's wages to allow him to live, so the one who has stolen ought, from the heart, to desire an equitable path of restitution, even if he no longer has the means to pay it back at once.

The one who hungers for righteousness will not look for excuses to avoid repairing injustice, but will gladly receive any solution offered by the wronged party—whether work, compensation in installments, or another form of restitution—as an opportunity to fulfill the righteousness of God.

His sincere desire to live in the light will lead him to accept, with humility and gratitude, any avenue by which he can repair the harm done, knowing that righteousness is measured not by words alone, but by deeds that bring restoration.

This can be pursued with counsel and guidance from the body of Christ—the Church—which has been given for the growth of the saints and for the fulfillment of righteousness.

God requires that, along with the turning of the heart, there be the restoration of what was broken, for nothing unjust can exist in His Kingdom.

We see this in David: although he was forgiven for his sin, he still bore the consequences. When the prophet Nathan spoke to him about the man who seized his neighbor's lamb, David pronounced the verdict:

"And he shall restore the lamb fourfold, because he did this thing, and because he had no pity." (2 Samuel 12:6)

This judgment, spoken by his own conscience, came back upon him, showing that forgiveness does not cancel the need for justice. God cannot dwell with sin. His presence is a place of holiness, truth, and righteousness. To remain in sin—without repentance and without restitution—is to choose separation from God.

Zacchaeus and the law of restitution: repentance that leads to life. Authentic repentance is manifested in concrete deeds, and one of these is restitution. True change of heart does not stop at words or intentions, but is seen in actions that repair the injustice done.

When Zacchaeus met the Lord Jesus, he immediately understood this principle. He said: "Look, Lord! Here and now I give half of my possessions to the poor, and if I have

cheated anybody out of anything, I will pay back four times the amount" (Luke 19:8).

This decision was not imposed on him by the Lord Jesus — it flowed from a heart that, when confronted, responded with repentance. Zacchaeus did not seek excuses; he chose to make right what he had done wrong. This is what true repentance looks like: it admits guilt, corrects the wrong, and brings light where there was darkness.

He fulfilled the verse in Ezekiel 33:15 — "If the wicked man returns what he took as security, gives back what he has stolen, follows the decrees that give life, and does no evil, he will surely live; he will not die." This verse highlights an essential principle of God's righteousness: authentic repentance is not merely an inner change, but involves concrete acts of justice. God does not give life to the one who only regrets sin, but to the one who repairs the harm done. Restitution is a condition for forgiveness and for life.

Like Zacchaeus, who realized he could not keep what he had unjustly obtained and repaid fourfold what he had taken, so too must the wrongdoer return what was taken if he wants to live. This is the proof of real repentance and of a life aligned with the standard of God's Kingdom. After Zacchaeus made his decision, the Lord Jesus confirmed: "Today salvation has come to this house."

This is the evidence of a transformed heart. Restitution is not merely a legal obligation — it is an expression of justice, a sincere desire to repair wrongs done. God hates robbery because it is a direct attack against justice, against one's neighbor, and against divine order. Whoever robs and does not restore cannot dwell in God's presence, because they refuse to align themselves with His holy character.

Authentic repentance is not just regret or tears — it is restitution, repair, and transformation. Only a heart that loves justice and hates wickedness can be a dwelling place for the Holy Spirit.

This post is an excerpt from the booklet "Life Lived in the Righteousness of Christ", which you can read in full, free of charge. More studies and resources for spiritual awakening are available at https://www.unmodifiedword.com.